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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7145th meeting
Thursday, 20 March 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Maes	(Luxembourg)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Ms. King
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Manzi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2014/123)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2014/123)

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Karin Landgren, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Staffan Tillander, Chair of the Liberian country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and representative of Sweden, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/123, which contains the twenty-seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Ms. Landgren.

Ms. Landgren: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to update and complement the report before the Council on the situation in Liberia (S/2014/123).

The political and security environment remains relatively stable. Progress continues in a number of areas, but as Liberia enters its second post-conflict decade, it also continues to face great challenges to institutionalizing reforms in critical sectors and building capacity for effective governance. These are complex and daunting processes, as even before the war Liberia had few well-functioning meritocratic institutions and effective accountability mechanisms. Seizing this window to get the fundamentals right will be critical to consolidating Liberia's hard-won peace and to charting the country's inclusive development.

Voices across a wide spectrum continued to express dissatisfaction with national authorities and policies. Motorcycle taxi unions, business owners and civil society have held demonstrations; health workers have gone on strike twice since December; and all operations at Liberia's main university were interrupted for three months due to student protests and violence. Eleven anti-government protestors were charged with sedition in October, bringing criticism that the Government was using the law in an instrumental manner to dampen opposition and dissent. Tensions between large concessions and communities continued.

Legislative elections for half of the Senate's 30 seats are scheduled for October. Approaching the end of the voter roll update, the National Elections Commission has registered some 60,000 people, far short of its initial goal of 400,000 — a goal later cut by half. About one-third of registrants are women. This month, the Senate approved an amendment to the election law that encourages parties to include at least 30 per cent women in their governing structures and candidate lists. Although this falls short of an obligation and still requires the concurrence of the House of Representatives, the measure represents a step forward in the public debate over women's political representation.

Turning now to Liberia's reform processes, since January the Constitution Review Committee has had more structured and sustained engagement with the legislature. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continues to advocate for broader agreement among major stakeholders, including the executive, on the scope and timeline of constitutional reform. The Committee's civic education activities faced severe delays, causing their public consultations to be conducted largely in parallel with civic education. A national conference to validate constitutional amendment proposals ahead of their submission to the President is planned for April. Should this also be delayed, the mid-2014 target for submitting these proposals may be difficult to meet. On the other hand, pushing the pace in order to meet these timelines could risk compromising the quality of public consultations and miss the opportunity to incorporate the public's views.

The Government also took further steps towards implementing its decentralization policy. Efforts towards deconcentrating 12 ministries and agencies continued, with greatest progress in critical service areas, such as health and education, where both ministries have established county boards and devolved some monetary resources and decision-making. The Governance Commission is attentive to UNMIL and donor partner concerns about weak coordination in the

overall deconcentration process. A local Government act, calling for the election of local officials and other critical measures for effective decentralization, has been drafted and is now with the President, although the current version would require constitutional amendment for its implementation.

These reforms are fundamental for the country's future, more inclusive, character, which also links them to national reconciliation. With the National Reconciliation Road Map giving structure to the process, and with the Peacebuilding Fund having allocated $15 million to reconciliation initiatives, some progress has been made. The Palava Hut initiative was launched in October, but discussions around methodology continue, and actual implementation has not yet begun. A national history project and a review of national symbols have both been launched, although their implementation has been slow. The Government's contribution to the implementation of the Road Map has been limited, with most successes being in those areas receiving funds from the international community.

Let me turn now to two broad areas central to continued stability: issues of accountability and transparency, and issues of justice and security.

There have been some recent efforts to secure greater public accountability. The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission has begun investigating bribery allegations made against a former legislator and an official of the National Oil Company of Liberia. Also, last month six former senior officials of the Forestry Development Authority were indicted on charges of economic sabotage and criminal conspiracy related to the fraudulent issuance of timber private use permits for commercial logging on 2.5 million hectares of land. The Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy also completed a draft mine and mineral act, calling for benefits-sharing with communities. The Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative has done important work in conducting post-contract award process audits and strengthening the sanctions regime for non-compliant companies and the Government. These developments are positive, and I cannot overstate the importance of greater accountability, transparency and consultation with communities in Liberia's valuable natural-resource sector.

Since last month, the Armed Forces of Liberia have been led by a Liberian for the first time since the war. There was palpable jubilation in the streets and on the airwaves at the appointment of Brigadier General Daniel D. Ziankhan. As the Council is well aware, progress in Liberia's security sector is critical to UNMIL's steady military drawdown. The Liberia National Police (LNP), bearing the greatest burden of the security transition, has been hard pressed to cope. Complicated budgetary procedures and its own weak capacity for financial management have limited the ability of the police to administer even small allocations. I want to highlight some important commitments the Government made at the start of this year that are expected to give a boost to the security sector.

The first is the personal engagement of the Minister of Finance. In February, the Minister took steps to ease the complicated requirements for disbursement of transition-related funds to the police, immigration service and other agencies. This will alleviate the paralysis at the police training academy, which has over 1,000 recruits waiting to start training. These funds will also help to resource urgent operational requirements related to the security transition. UNMIL applauds the Minister's continued involvement, which has also addressed critical needs at the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.

The second is the President's own commitment to activating more training resources and the better use of facilities. With partners, the United Nations has supported the fast-tracking of management training for officers of the LNP and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. Together with the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, UNMIL is also supporting the conversion of former UNMIL facilities in Foya, Lofa county, into a new immigration training centre. However, more needs to be done to operationalize the LNP regional training centre in Harper, and to make better use of training facilities at the justice and security hub in Gbarnga. The President has also committed to achieving a better balance in the 2014-2015 national budget between infrastructure and national security, and to streamlining procedures for financing recurrent costs.

There has been progress in a number of areas within the security sector following a series of reviews conducted last year. Most notable has been the baseline assessment of the Liberia National Police, which has informed a new LNP strategic plan and a joint LNP-United Nations development framework that outlines specific and targeted interventions to fill gaps, while including a robust monitoring and evaluation system.

The framework is expected to be signed by the LNP and UNMIL next week. A similar joint baseline assessment of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization will be completed this year. Following a security sector reform retreat in September, marked by frank discussion, the National Security Council is overseeing preparation of a new national security strategy. UNMIL will continue to offer support through this process.

In June, UNMIL will complete the second phase of its three-phase military drawdown endorsed by the Council. As I speak, United Nations troops are withdrawing from counties along the Sierra Leone border to cover other areas, and another battalion is being repatriated. At the conclusion of these movements, half of Liberia's counties will be left without a fixed United Nations military presence, with the remaining battalions configured to provide coverage in Monrovia and along the Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea borders, which are also the country's most populated areas.

The joint transition planning process is an example of exceptional collaboration between UNMIL and the Government. The implementation of the first phase highlighted deep institutional weaknesses and stringent resource constraints. National institutions have begun taking on security functions in areas no longer covered by UNMIL, such as static guard duties at important locations, including at the Monrovia Freeport and the Central Bank. To achieve this, however, they have spread existing capacity more thinly, and at times diverted resources away from priority areas.

When planning began for this security transition, the impending withdrawal of United Nations forces from any county prompted public and Government anxiety. The public discourse has shifted now to acknowledging that UNMIL will not be staying forever. The coming phases will need careful management. The detailed joint planning to date, Government and UNMIL dialogue with communities, and the calibrated and gradual phasing of the drawdown have been instrumental in allaying concerns, while making clear the goals to be reached by Liberia's security institutions.

An effective security sector needs to work with a functioning criminal justice system that inspires public trust, which remains extremely low in Liberia. Some 75 per cent of the prison population is in pre-trial detention, creating insecurity in overcrowded prisons, while failure effectively to prosecute even serious crimes promotes a culture of impunity. Many courts in Liberia still fail to sit, and those that do address a minute fraction of pending cases, with UNMIL monitoring showing that, on average, only 8 per cent of cases are fully tried. The first justice and security hub is operational and has brought services to the counties it covers. Based on lessons learned, services are now slowly being rolled out in the second and third hubs. Once hubs are established, it is the Government's obligation to sustain their functioning.

Measures have also been taken to implement the recommendations of last year's management and accountability review of the police, judiciary and prosecution, which were validated in November. Among these is the drafting of a police act, which is expected to address clear and merit-based recruitment and promotion procedures within the police and issues of police oversight. However, the disbarring of the Minister of Justice for six months by the Supreme Court in January has created additional challenges to gaining momentum in justice and security sector reforms.

Meanwhile, there are encouraging parallel developments that can also help to reduce conflict. Last week I visited one of Liberia's six land coordination centres, in Harper, Maryland county, and met with two claimants who had been locked in decades of dispute over their lands. The centre is working to resolve this and to demarcate the properties. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund-supported alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as the land coordination centres, using trained staff, will remain important and should receive significant international support for the years to come. As the local head of the land coordination centre explained to me, its mediation role is free, also making it more attractive to users than the justice system.

Since I last addressed this body (see S/PV.7029), there has been steady progress towards durable solutions for those who sought refuge in Liberia in connection with the Ivorian post-election crisis. Voluntary repatriations surpassed targets in 2013, and in January and February of this year over 5,300 refugees returned to Côte d'Ivoire, with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, in the early morning hours of 17 February, the Government of Liberia, a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, forcibly returned a group of Ivorians, including 14 refugees, to Côte D'Ivoire, in breach of international law, in what appears to have been a closely coordinated operation with the Ivorian Government. Six

of the refugees have since been returned to Liberia. The Government has not been forthcoming with UNMIL as to the nature of the operation.

Over 46,000 Ivorian refugees remain in Liberia, and I am concerned that recent events, including an attack in Côte d'Ivoire near the border on 23 February, may have a chilling effect on returns. I am encouraged that the two Governments, with UNHCR, plan to resume the work of the Tripartite Commission on Humanitarian and Refugee Issues at the ministerial-level meeting this month. Despite a long period of calm, the situation remains fragile along the Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire border. Aside from their apparent security cooperation, engagement between the two Governments on concrete measures to stabilize the border has continued to be overshadowed by other priorities, or hampered by resource constraints.

With the closure of our sister mission in Sierra Leone this month, we reflect on the stability that has returned to West Africa and to Liberia's neighbours. As we look ahead, we are conscious of regional and national watershed events to come: presidential elections in 2015 in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, and in 2017 in Liberia. Much is at stake here, and stability and confidence will need to be maintained. We are equally conscious of the enormous pressures on United Nations peacekeeping globally, with resources needed in several countries simply to avert immediate bloodshed. UNMIL is currently engaged in a comparative analysis with the United Nations country team, on which we expect to report at our next meeting. But the Council should be under no illusion that the bulk of UNMIL work can be assumed by anyone other than the Government of Liberia itself. Continuing to manage an appropriate exit strategy from Liberia, in whose stability the international community has invested so much, will remain a delicate challenge for UNMIL and for the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Landgren for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tillander.

Mr. Tillander: Let me first express my appreciation to the presidency of the Security Council for its invitation to me to give the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) perspectives on key peacebuilding challenges facing Liberia.

I will focus my remarks today, on justice and security, national reconciliation, and land tenure and natural resources, and I will also discuss mobilization of support and resources and the need to accelerate capacity-building in view of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) transition.

The PBC country configuration for Liberia — with its approximately 40 Member States — offers support based on the statement of mutual commitments, and in close collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNMIL. As we are now in the process of finalizing the third review of the statement, we can conclude that while some progress has been made on building capacity in justice and security, and while some aspects of national reconciliation have moved forward, many commitments still remain unfulfilled.

If Liberia is to implement its own plans and stated policy goals, there is a need for sustained Government attention and focus on key peacebuilding challenges. While the international community can certainly play an important supportive role, there is no substitute for Liberian ownership, political will and leadership. The good offices of the United Nations and partners can support continued Liberian attention to peacebuilding priorities through dialogue and the marshaling of support and resources.

One area of particular concern is justice and the rule of law. Progress here has been very slow, as is evident not only in police training, but also in the slow pace of reform of the judiciary, corrections and other areas. As the UNMIL drawdown continues, it is necessary for Liberian institutions to increase their capacity to provide satisfactory standards of justice, security and other related services across the country. What can then be done to accelerate progress?

One example was offered during my most recent visit as the Minister of Finance, in connection with the discussion on the statement of mutual commitments, initiated a series of meetings with all involved, aimed at ensuring that police training will get the decisions, commitments and budget necessary to move ahead. This high-level coordinated engagement needs to continue, and implementation must follow. Sustained attention is necessary. If that happens, police training may improve. There is no reason why that should not be possible, but the experience of the past 18 months

has not been encouraging in this regard. Hopefully, we should now see a change.

The sustainability of progress is a concern, as is the need to ensure a balanced strengthening of the entire rule-of-law chain. As I observed during my recent visit to Liberia, relations between the State and citizens are fragile and the sense of mutual trust is weak. To improve public trust, political and judicial services must focus on quality as well as quantity, and ensure stronger public oversight. A comprehensive and coordinated approach is necessary, effectively linking short-term measures to long-term development plans. UNMIL and the United Nations country team should continue to work hand in hand and increase their integration. For the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), no other task is more important than this, and its contribution must be effective, efficient and timely. That is especially true in view of the UNMIL drawdown and the need to coordinate a comprehensive and integrated approach to rule of law.

The regional justice and security hubs aim to facilitate decentralization and better access to justice for all levels of society in every region of the country. The first hub in Gbarnga is now providing services to the three counties. Its impact can be felt to varying degrees throughout the counties concerned and is being assessed and evaluated to guide future efforts. In particular, the quicker deployment of police officers to emergency situations in the hub counties has prevented conflicts from escalating. One major challenge has been public outreach to inform people in all three hub counties about the services that the hub is offering. Unfortunately, as surveys have shown, the hub is known mostly to people living in the Gbarnga region.

Based on lessons learned from the first hub, including the public outreach component, services are beginning to be delivered from the second and third hubs, but this time the focus has been on services rather than infrastructure for quicker roll-out. These are positive developments, in the right direction, although they are not fast enough, especially in view of the UNMIL drawdown.

Several bilateral partners are already involved in justice and security. Some, including the European Union, are in the process of stepping up support and considering substantial levels and with long-term commitment. If this is to be possible and have the intended effects, Government commitment must be strong and evident through sufficient budget allocations, commitment to reform, and political will. Bilateral donors would be more eager to engage when linked to clear Government leadership and strategy.

On national reconciliation, and as stated by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Landgren, the Government of Liberia launched the Palava Hut programme, the national history project and the national symbols project. Discussion on South-South cooperation may lead to inspiring exchanges of experiences from other countries, but in most of those areas implementation remains very slow. The Liberian Government must ensure that the institutions responsible for the different areas have the determination, mandate and resources necessary, and that implementation is accelerated within the coordinated framework of the road map for reconciliation. There is a need for action to deal with the past, truth-telling, atonement and reconciliation, to ensure women's participation, and to follow up the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has provided considerable support already, and it is encouraging that the Government has stated that it will commit additional resources to implementation. That will be absolutely essential. There is also a need for a costed and coordinated implementation plan. The PBC is prepared to support Government-led efforts to marshal support and resources for national reconciliation.

Land and natural resources are essential to peacebuilding efforts. If managed correctly, they may contribute to peace consolidation and sustainable economic growth. During my last visit, I had the opportunity to see some of the progress made in land-dispute resolution, supported by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the World Bank and the United States. The land law and the establishment of a land agency could become important tools for further progress in dealing with conflicting claims to land by communities, concessions and individuals. This is also one of the issues raised in the letter I received from the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003), and one of several issues I raised with the President and Ministers during my recent visit. Government representatives acknowledged that more is needed to deal with the challenges and to ensure a sustainable management of land and natural resources. The World Bank and UNDP are now stepping up efforts

and support in this area, including with support from the PBF and the encouragement of the PBC.

In line with its stated intention to fight corruption, the Government of Liberia has recently taken actions to take perpetrators to court. This is welcome, but more needs to be done to ensure that corruption does not go unpunished. Oversight mechanisms need to be strengthened across all public institutions. The judiciary needs to be strengthened, and the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission should be given the means and tools to ensure accountability, in complementarity with the criminal justice system.

Civil society plays an important role in channeling the views of groups, individuals and local communities, thereby supporting a free flow of information that will help decision-makers in the private and public sectors to better understand the nature of the challenges and to promote mechanisms that will help resolve disputes, or maybe even deal with them before they appear. It is important to secure the political space from which these organizations operate.

Nowhere is this more obvious than on gender issues, where women can play a key role in promoting peace and reconciliation with strong and sustained support from Ministers concerned, UN Women and UNMIL. With the PBF increasing its allocation for gender-related activities in Liberia above the 15-per cent target set by the Secretary-General, the Government and partners have every reason to step up their efforts to ensure that women can play the necessary role in building sustainable peace in Liberia.

The Liberian agenda for transformation, together with the Government's commitment to elaborating a new deal compact, should provide a continued and strengthened focus on all five State-building and peacebuilding goals, including those covered by the statement of mutual commitments. The PBC should contribute to this effort and ensure that its work supports national ownership and is aligned with such jointly elaborated mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Tillander for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.